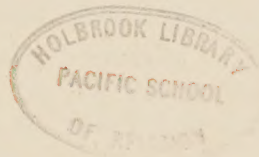


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Lutheran Urges Protestants, Catholics, Jews to Meet

(New York) - A leading Lutheran theologian in America has proposed the setting up of a study centre for theological conversations between Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews.

Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan, who put forward the idea at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Christians and Jews here, is the author of a book on "The Riddle of Roman Catholicism", which recently won the Abingdon Award of \$12,500 for a religious work.

Urging increased study and understanding between the three major American religious groups, Dr. Pelikan said that Christianity needed to confront Judaism because when it was out of touch with Judaism it lost touch with part of itself.

He declared that "whenever in Christian history Christians have neglected their ties with the ancient people of God, they have been impoverished in both faith and understanding".

Dr. Pelikan made the same point about Protestant understanding of Catholicism. He said he had been led to a better understanding of Martin Luther by studying the

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Roman Catholic Church "because Luther formulated many of his ideas in opposition to one or another trend in Roman Catholicism" and also "because despite his estrangement from Rome he retained huge chunks of Catholic piety and doctrine in his outlook".

The Lutheran theologian emphasized that "it is impossible to make sense of either Judaism or Roman Catholicism as we know them without reference to the major movements that have broken off from them, and, in so doing, have changed them".

EPS, Geneva

Netherlands "Gereformeerde" Churches Seen Nearer to WCC

(The Hague) - "The voice of the Gereformeerde Churches - especially their younger members - which advocates joining in the World Council of Churches, has become increasingly stronger", according to the Press and Information Service of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands.

The Gereformeerde Churches, which broke for doctrinal reasons with the majority Reformed Church during the nineteenth century, are the second largest Protestant church community in the country, with census estimates of adherents at over 600,000 by comparison with the Reformed Church's three million.

The Utrecht student pastor J.M. van Minnen, a Gereformeerde minister, has told the Netherlands Ecumenical Youth Council that opinion in his church has been put off by "very one-sided information". He said that though this was being offset the Gereformeerde synod meanwhile "can hardly do anything else than preserve the question of World Council membership in the ice-box of matters to be studied".

Urging the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Netherlands to provide sound information to speed the process, Dr. van Minnen said that his church might be able to bring to the ecumenical movement a Calvinistic conception of the "pluriformity of the Church" to correct tendencies toward mass-thinking and uniformity in ecumenical circles.

The Gereformeerde general synod in October decided to retain membership in the Netherlands Missionary Council if it decides to participate as an "affiliated council" in the proposed Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC after its proposed integration with the International Missionary Council in 1961.


However, the synod said that the participation of the Gereformeerde churches after the integration was conditional on all actions of the Commission on World Mission being taken only by the national missionary councils that form it, as is the case at present with the IMC.

EPS, Geneva

Roman Catholics Asked to Pray with Protestants in Lyon

(Lyon, France) - Roman Catholics in the French city of Lyon have been urged to pray with and for Protestants who are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the French Reformed Church this year.

A message included in the Catholic priests' weekly "La Semaine Religieuse" last week coincided with the meeting of the Reformed Church's regional synod in Lyon.



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Referring to the synod meetings the message says: "Our Christian brethren will not participate in a sterile recollection of the past. The Lord will confront them with demands implicit in the Christian life, new responsibilities in obedience to the Gospel. They must see these in ever improved fidelity to the witness they owe to Jesus Christ."

The appeal goes on to say to Catholics that "such an anniversary at the same time stirs up in us the great pain of separation and the grasp of a clear-sighted awareness of the seriousness of our differences. However," continues the statement, "we thank God that this celebration takes place in the climate of mutual respect, positive charity, sincere humility, which everywhere gradually enfolds Christians seized with the hope of the full unity of love and truth."

Echoing the thought of the late Abbé Paul Couturier, Lyon pioneer of prayer for unity, the message says that "in the One Christ, praying for His own on the evening of Holy Thursday, we shall ever better encounter our baptized brethren. We are assured", it states, "that they themselves intercede for our absolute fidelity to Jesus Christ. The mystery of love and truth can only be one with that of unity."

"On this level and in this perspective", concludes the Roman Catholic document, "our prayer is linked with that of our Protestant brothers of Lyon during these days."

EPS, Geneva

American Leaders Survey Christian World Mission

(Greenwich, Conn.) - Thirty-five leaders of American ecumenical and missionary organizations met here October 30 - November 1 for the first of a series of regional consultations on "The Christian World Mission in the Ecumenical Age".

The International Missionary Council is sponsoring the meetings in America, Asia, Africa and Europe in the period 1959-1960 as part of a comprehensive study on "The Theology of Mission", and in preparation for the proposed integration of the IMC with the World Council of Churches at New Delhi, India, in late 1961.

Leaders in the Greenwich meeting included Dr. D.T. Niles, Ceylon Methodist evangelist, who is cooperating with Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, IMC general secretary, in the carrying through of the programme. Dr. Niles will use the findings of the studies to write a book on the Christian mission today.

The main criticisms of missions current in Asia, including China, were presented by Professor M. Searle Bates of Union Theological Seminary, New York. Dr. David M. Stowe, of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions reviewed American Christians' criticisms.

The total mission of the Church and its theological meaning were analysed by Professor James H. Nichols of the University of Chicago and by Dr. Niles.

Other addresses on the place of foreign missions in the Church's total task came from Professor Charles Forman of Yale Divinity School, Professor Carl Michalson of Drew Theological Seminary, New Jersey, Dr. James K. Mathews of the Methodist Church's Division of World Missions, Dr. John Coventry Smith of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, Dr. Roswell P. Barnes, executive secretary of the World Council of Churches in the USA, and Dr. Alford Carleton, missionary executive from the United Church of Christ.

Findings of the consultation will be referred to a commission under the chairmanship of Dr. John Baillie, a president of the WCC, on the Theology of Mission, which was set up by the IMC and WCC last summer (see EPS No. 36). The commission will study the results of all the consultations and the draft of Dr. Niles' book before preparing a report.

Dr. Tracey K. Jones of the Methodist Division of World Missions was chairman of the Greenwich consultation. Dr. David M. Stowe was secretary. EPS, Geneva

Catholic-Orthodox Reunion Evaluated by US Bishops

(Pittsburgh, Pa.) - Church leaders, one from the Roman Catholic Church, the other from the Syrian Antiochian Church, have put forward reasons for advocating reunion between the Church of Rome and Orthodoxy.

Bishop John J. Wright of the Roman Catholic diocese of Pittsburgh and Archbishop Anthony Bashir of New York, head of the Syrian Church in North America, made the points when they both spoke at a dinner in a Syrian Orthodox church in Pittsburgh.

"Our common heritage includes apostolic persons, apostolic places, apostolic doctrines, the appreciation of and attachment to apostolic succession", Bishop Wright told the audience. "We both understand the concept of hierarchy and the public liturgical life which Jesus intended the Church to have."

Archbishop Bashir renewed a welcome he had previously expressed in public for the Pope's decision to call an Ecumenical Council to deal with Christian unity.

The archbishop reaffirmed his support for Roman Catholic-Orthodox conversations as a first step. He said Orthodox and Catholics had more in common because they accepted apostolic succession and the authority of general councils and that the more complicated differences between them and the Protestants should be faced later.

EPS, Geneva

Hromadka Sees Atheism as World Phenomenon

(Frankfurt-on-Main) - Czech Protestant leader Joseph Hromadka of Prague told a German audience here that atheism must not be equated with Communism.

The Prague theologian declared that it would be "catastrophic" to look on atheism as a political force because it is officially proclaimed by Communist states.

According to Dr. Hromadka atheism is a general human phenomenon of titanic proportions, attributable to science and technology. He said the job was to convince the Communists of this fact.

"We can wage a fruitful struggle with the Communists only if we understand their new society and have goodwill towards it, and if we assume responsibility for the new society and for Communist society", the professor observed.

Claiming that Communist rule in Eastern Europe was due to decades of omission on the part of democracy in the past, Dr. Hromadka asserted that the clock could not be turned back. However, he said, Christians could challenge Communists with a new reality. They could show them - not by discussion, but by practical conduct - that the Communist idea about all Christians being "either reactionaries or obscurantists" was false.

EPS, Geneva

East German Crowds Flock to Evangelism Campaigns

(Berlin) - Autumn preaching campaigns in the East German Republic (DDR) have drawn large crowds.

An Evangelism Week in the St. Nicholas Church at Stralsund, with the title "What We Christians Can't Surrender" was widely advertised by posters in the streets of the town and by personal invitations. Attendances grew every night and included youth, some of whom stayed behind after the meetings to talk things over with the evangelist.

Another big response is reported at a campaign run for the St. Martin Church in Dresden by Dr. de Boor, a preacher from Schwerin. On two nights people had to be turned away from a church packed with 2,500 listeners. Some morning and afternoon Bible study groups were attended by over 1,000. The week was run by member bodies of the Evangelical Alliance. EPS, Geneva

East German Church Conference Takes Stand on Socialist Rites

(Berlin) - The Conference of Protestant regional churches in East Germany has issued statements to congregations, pastors and church workers about the DDR government's attempt to substitute socialist rites for church ceremonies at baptisms, marriages and funerals.

The Conference of East German Churches includes representatives of all the major regional Evangelical churches in the DDR.

The message to the churches says the aim of the state-supported rites is to win people's allegiance for an ideology that denies God's existence. It affirms that anyone whose convictions lead him to take part in the ceremonies is personally answerable to God.

If people are forced to participate, and threatened with discrimination if they refuse, the Church is bound to protest, says the statement.

"These socialist ceremonies may be very festive and impressive", the message goes on, "but for us Christians the fact remains that they are godless and their purpose is to take the place of our church ceremonies. In spite of assertions that they are neutral civic ceremonies, the conclusive thing for us is our Lord's saying: 'No man can serve two masters'".

A pamphlet for pastors says that "God never regards anyone as completely lost". This insight, according to the churches' leaders, must determine the attitude of the genuine spiritual adviser to the weak and wandering and even to enemies of the Church. "But", says the pamphlet, "it would be wrong to interpret mercy as meaning that participation in the Socialist rites was of no importance. Simply to declare them to be without validity when taken under pressure is not enough."

For this reason the pamphlet warns against taking a child to a "name-giving" ceremony without further formality. Pastors are asked to find out from parents and godparents whether they want the child to be brought up as a Christian afterwards.

In the case of marriage the possibility of a church wedding alongside the socialist rite is ruled out, but pastors are instructed to deal with applications for church weddings, by people who ask some time after the socialist rite, and to decide whether to marry them after examining their reasons for coming to the Church.

The pamphlet says it is a pastor's duty to provide a Christian funeral ceremony after socialist rites if asked to do so by Christian relatives or friends of the deceased person. His death can also be announced in a church service.

Pastors are again reminded that Christian Confirmation is incompatible with the socialist "Youth Dedication" ceremony, which is regarded as an act of allegiance to atheism.

EPS, Geneva

Salonica Celebrates 600th Anniversary of Saint's Death

(Salonica, Greece) - Colourful celebrations marked the 600th anniversary of the death of Saint Gregory Palomas (1296-1359), Byzantine leader of the "Inner Light" movement on the Holy Mountain of Athos, and later Archbishop of Salonica.

In liturgies, commemorative lectures and academic events attended by Orthodox leaders from some ten countries, the saint's work was commemorated November 11-15.

High points of the pan-Orthodox festivities came on November 14, the anniversary day, with a Solemn Liturgy in the church bearing the saint's name and a lecture by Professor George Florovsky of Harvard on "St. Gregory Palomas and Orthodox Tradition".

Professor Florovsky declared that the Orthodox Church is based on the preaching of the apostles and the teaching of the church fathers. He criticized the belief that the age of the fathers ended in the fifth century and said the teaching of St. Gregory Palomas was an example of an "existential" application of Christian truth, which had continued through a line of great Orthodox teachers until today.

(The writings of St. Gregory are among the most important of the Byzantine period. They stress the "taking up into God" of redeemed man as a result of the Incarnation.)

Other speakers at the celebrations included Professors Hamilcar Alivisatos of Athens, John Kalogirou of Salonica, and Chrysostomos Constantinides of Halki on "The Unity of Orthodoxy". Professor Andrew Phytrakis of the University of Athens and Father Theoklitos Dionysiatis of Mount Athos lectured on "Orthodox Monasticism".

Honorary doctorates of divinity were conferred by the University of Salonica on Professor Florovsky, Professor Alivisatos and Emeritus Professors Louvaris and Soutiriou of Athens.

Twelve bishops took part in a closing liturgy on Sunday, November 15.

Among visitors were representatives of the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Moscow. The Church of Cyprus and the Russian Orthodox Churches in Paris, Yugoslavia and Hungary also sent participants.

The celebrations were organized by the Metropolitan Panteleimon of Salonica.

EPS, Geneva

Merger Plan Put to Danish Free Churches

(Copenhagen) - A plan to merge the free churches of Denmark into a single church has been presented to the Danish Evangelical Free Church Council.

It was referred to a fuller meeting of ministers from the Baptist, Evangelical Lutheran, Methodist, Mission Covenant, Free and Evangelical Churches, to be held next year.

A Methodist pastor, the Rev. Poul-Erik Bjerno, put forward the plan. It suggests as a doctrinal basis for organic union the Trinity, Holy Scripture as "inspired Word of God" and the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

Each uniting group would retain its forms of worship, but common orders of worship would be prepared in addition. Both infant and adult baptism would be used as alternative forms.

A synod for the church, with clergy and laymen in equal numbers, would elect bishops.

The suggested merger would create a church of about 15,000 members.

EPS, Geneva

In Brief

Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America has told the Greek Orthodox Youth of America that he might lead their annual pilgrimage to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople next summer. The archbishop has been asked by the Patriarch to be chairman of a meeting of Orthodox leaders in Rhodes, July 1-15.

* *

Pope John XXIII has announced that the Synod of the Rome Diocese will open on January 25, 1960, the last day of the Roman Catholic Octave of prayer for unity with the Holy See and the anniversary of his own first announcement of the forthcoming Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church.

* *

Bishop Otto Dibelius' controversial essay on "Authority" (see EPS Nos. 42,43). has been banned by magistrates of East Berlin, part of the bishop's diocese, on the ground that it infringes the city's statutes. The publication may not be copied, printed or distributed.

* *

East German authorities refused visas for 33 ministers and laymen from West Germany who applied to attend the Ninth Town Kirchentag at Weimar, November 2-6.

* *

Two women divinity graduates in Sweden have been granted the right to preach, but not to administer the sacraments, by Bishop Helge Ljungberg of Stockholm. They are Dr. Margit Sahlin, director of St. Catherine's Foundation, an institute for training women church workers, and Mrs. Barbro Nordholm-Stahl. Dr. Sahlin, who is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, was given permission to conduct services in a new chapel of the Foundation as well as in other churches of the diocese. Mrs. Nordholm-Stahl will conduct services in the congregation of Oscar, where she is employed as secretary. EPS, Geneva

A Special Report

France's Taizé Community Starts New Ventures

(Taizé, France) - Twenty years after its foundation by Prior Roger Schutz, the Reformed Men's resident community of Taizé, situated in a small Burgundy village, reports a membership of forty brothers from Calvinist and Lutheran backgrounds in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany.

The brothers, some laymen and others ordained, agree to a common life of poverty, chastity and obedience. They have a rule of life that stresses interior silence and meditation on the beatitudes and join three times a day in worship with an accent on intercession for the Church and the world.

Developments in the thought of the Taizé community are reflected in a recent book by Roger Schutz called "Living God's Today" (Vivre l'Aujourd'hui de Dieu). Printed elegantly but simply by the presses established on the brotherhood's property, the book points up Taizé's current concerns: active presence in movements for church unity and renewal; new forms of service by professionally competent brothers who go out "two by two" to tackle experiments at "strategic points" among the troubled or disinherited masses.

Taizé brothers have recently gone to live among Africans in the populous outskirts of Treichville on the Ivory Coast in West Africa, among Moslems in Algiers and with the working class population in Marseilles.

Among centres of church renewal and interconfessional contact currently served by two brothers at a time, are the Montbéliard region of Eastern France and the ecumenical centre of Packard Manse, near Boston, USA.

Taizé itself has become a centre for spiritual seekers who need silence and prayer. Brother Max Thurian and others are engaged in theological research. Thurian's books on worship, marriage and celibacy, Holy Communion and confession have been widely read and translated into other languages.

In the village where the brothers live they have established a model farm and taken the initiative in organizing rural cooperatives for surrounding farmers. One brother is a practising country doctor. Others are well-known potters and there is a painter. The musical life of the community is also creative and lively.

Projects for the future include the setting up of a conference centre in the nearby village of Cormatin. Now under construction, from next summer onward the building will house meetings of people from varied backgrounds to deal with reasons for Christian division and Christian responsibility in social, political, racial and economic problems today.

Explaining the objectives of the new meeting place, a spokesman of the community writes: "It is apparent that ecumenism is today up against a certain number of confessional prejudices strongly rooted in the great mass of Christian believers: historical situations that tend to solidify because of a lack of objective information, misunderstandings perpetuated by the absence of mutual openness, the isolation of certain areas of Christianity by massive social barriers.

"All these are obstacles to unity between Christians. The Cormatin meetings will endeavour to find out what they are, study them without prejudice and try to resolve them in a spirit of intelligent love." EPS, Geneva

PICTURES to illustrate this article may be obtained on request to John Taylor, Information Department, World Council of Churches, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva, Switzerland.

Correction

EPS No. 44, page 3, WSCF: The letter sent to member movements concerning approach to Moslem students was not based on the report of the investigation team, but was drafted by the team following their tour. EPS, Geneva

